

Testimony in Support of SB0867
Economic Development - Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission - Alterations

March 3, 2026

Chair Pamela Beidle
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Cc: Vice Chair Antonio Hayes, Committee Members

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Dr. Willie L. Brown, Jr. I am submitting this testimony as a citizen of the State of Maryland and as a current appointed member of the Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission (MATC). I respectfully urge your favorable support of SB0867.

Maryland stands at a pivotal moment in aerospace, space systems, advanced manufacturing, autonomy, quantum-enabled technologies, and next-generation defense capabilities. Global projections indicate that the space economy alone is expected to approach \$1.5 trillion within the next decade. The U.S. aerospace and defense sector already generates nearly \$1 trillion in annual sales and supports high-wage employment across supply chains and advanced manufacturing ecosystems. Maryland is uniquely positioned to lead in this expanding global market.

The Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission has developed a comprehensive strategic framework designed to connect the State's extraordinary assets into an integrated, end-to-end innovation pipeline. This includes research and development, testing and evaluation, manufacturing, commercialization, workforce development, and strategic marketing. SB0867 provides the legislative foundation necessary to operationalize that framework.

The Commission's plan is not abstract. It identifies Aerospace and Technology Zones (ATZs) across regions of Maryland to transform regional strengths into statewide competitive advantage. These zones are designed to:

- Attract venture and foreign direct investment
- Accelerate research-to-market transitions
- Strengthen local economic development ecosystems
- Expand apprenticeship, internship, and workforce pipelines
- Support advanced manufacturing and Industry 4.0 transformation

Maryland's geographic, federal, and industrial footprint provides rare competitive leverage. However, we cannot assume that leadership will maintain itself. Other states are aggressively investing in aerospace clusters, advanced manufacturing corridors, and emerging autonomy and quantum-enabled platforms.

SB0867 helps Maryland compete. From an economic development perspective, this legislation supports:

- **Awareness:** Elevating aerospace and advanced technology as a lighthouse sector of strategic importance to Maryland's economic future.
- **Desire:** Providing legislators and regional stakeholders with a compelling opportunity to catalyze high-paying, innovation-driven job growth across multiple counties.
- **Knowledge:** Grounding decisions in data-driven strategic planning and coordinated statewide execution.
- **Ability:** Creating the structural capacity to execute - through coordinated leadership, grant mechanisms, workforce investments, and marketing infrastructure.
- **Reinforcement:** Establishing continuity and sustained momentum rather than fragmented initiatives.

Importantly, this is not merely a technology bill. It is an economic competitiveness bill. It aligns:

- Workforce development with industry demand
- Innovation ecosystems with commercialization pipelines
- Regional assets with statewide strategy
- Public-private partnerships with measurable economic return

Maryland has the research institutions, federal anchors, defense hubs, manufacturing capability, and talent base to lead nationally. SB0867 ensures that these assets are coordinated rather than siloed. Failure to act risks stagnation. Strategic investment now positions Maryland to:

- Capture national aerospace and defense contracts
- Grow small and mid-sized aerospace enterprises
- Retain and attract technical talent
- Expand apprenticeship and community-based workforce pipelines
- Increase GDP contribution and tax base growth

As a Maryland citizen and Commissioner, I believe SB0867 represents a disciplined, strategic, and forward-looking approach to ensuring Maryland remains competitive in one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0867. Thank you for your consideration and your leadership in strengthening Maryland's economic future.

Respectfully submitted,

Willie L. Brown, Jr.

Willie L. Brown, Jr., Ph.D.

Citizen, State of Maryland

Appointed Member, Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission